

Afar language

The **Afar language** (Afar: *Qafaraf*) (also known as **'Afar Af**, **Afaraf**, **Qafar af**) is an Afroasiatic language belonging to the Cushitic branch. It is spoken by the Afar people inhabiting Djibouti, Eritrea and Ethiopia.

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Classification

Afar is classified within the Cushitic branch of the Afroasiatic family. It is further categorized in the Lowland East Cushitic sub-group, along with Saho and Somali.^[3] Its closest relative is the Saho language.^[4]

Geographic distribution

The Afar language is spoken as a mother tongue by the Afar people in Djibouti, Eritrea, and the Afar Region of Ethiopia.^[4]

According to *Ethnologue*, there are 1,379,200 total Afar speakers. Of these, 1,280,000 were recorded in the 2007 Ethiopian census, with 906,000 monolinguals registered in the 1994 census.^[4]

Official status

Afar	
<i>Qafar af</i>	
Native to	Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia
Region	Horn of Africa
Ethnicity	Afar
Native speakers	1,973,800 (2017) ^[1]
Language family	Afro-Asiatic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cushitic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lowland East Cushitic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Saho–Afar<ul style="list-style-type: none">Afar
Writing system	Latin
Official status	
Recognised minority language in	 Djibouti <div> <div> Eritrea</div> <div> Ethiopia</div> </div>
Language codes	
ISO 639-1	aa (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?iso_639_1=aa)
ISO 639-2	aar (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=1)
ISO 639-3	aar
Glottolog	afar1241 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/afar1241) ^[2]

In Djibouti, Afar is a recognized national language.^[5] It is also one of the broadcasting languages of the Radio Television of Djibouti public network.

In Eritrea, Afar is recognized as one of nine national languages which formally enjoy equal status although Tigrinya and Arabic are by far of greatest significance in official usage. There are daily broadcasts on the national radio and a translated version of the Eritrean constitution. In education, however, Afar speakers prefer Arabic – which many of them speak as a second language – as the language of instruction.^[6]

In the Afar Region of Ethiopia, Afar is also recognized as an official working language.^[7]

Phonology

Consonants

The consonants of the Afar language in the standard orthography are listed below (with IPA notation in brackets):

		<u>Labial</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>	<u>Retroflex</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Pharyngeal</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
<u>Stops</u>	voiceless		t [t]			k [k]		
	voiced	b [b]	d [d]			g [g]		
<u>Fricatives</u>	voiceless	f [f]	s [s]				c [ħ]	h [h]
	voiced						q [ʕ]	
<u>Nasals</u>		m [m]	n [n]					
<u>Approximants</u>		w [w]	l [l]		y [j]			
<u>Tap</u>			r [ɾ]	x [ɖ] ^[8]				

Voiceless stop consonants which close syllables are released, e.g., [ʌk^h ' me].

Vowels and stress

- *short*
 - a [ʌ]
 - e [e]
 - i [i]
 - o [o]
 - u [u]
- *long*
 - aa [a:]
 - ee [e:]
 - ii [i:]
 - oo [o:]
 - uu [u:]

Sentence final vowels of affirmative verbs are aspirated (and stressed), e.g. *abeh* = /a'be^h/ 'He did.' Sentence final vowels of negative verbs are not aspirated (nor stressed), e.g. *maabinna* = /'maabinna/ 'He did not do.' Sentence final vowels of interrogative verbs are lengthened (and stressed), e.g. *abee?* = /a'beː/ 'Did he do?' Otherwise, stress in word-final.

Phonotactics

Possible syllable shapes are V, VV, VC, VVC, CV, CVV and CVVC.^[9]

Syntax

As in most other Cushitic languages, the basic word order in Afar is subject–object–verb.^[4]

Writing system

In Ethiopia, Afar is written with the Ge'ez script (Ethiopic script). Since around 1849, the Latin script has been used in other areas to transcribe the language.^[4] Additionally, Afar is also transcribed using the Arabic script.^[10]

In the early 1970s, two Afar intellectuals and nationalists, Dimis and Redo, formalized the Afar alphabet. Known as *Qafar Feera*, the orthography is based on the Latin script.^[11]

Officials from the Institut des Langues de Djibouti, the Eritrean Ministry of Education, and the Ethiopian Afar Language Studies and Enrichment Center have since worked with Afar linguists, authors and community representatives to select a standard orthography for Afar from among the various existing writing systems used to transcribe the language.^[10]

Latin alphabet

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z
a, ba, ca, da, e, fa, ga, ha, i, ja, ka, la, ma, na, o, pa, qa, ra, sa, ta, u, va, wa, ya, za

[12]

See also

- Afar people
- Afar Region

Notes

1. "Afar" (<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/aar>). *Ethnologue*. Retrieved 2017-06-19.
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5. "Djibouti" (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/dj.html>). *The World Factbook*. CIA. Retrieved 31 August 2014.
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11. "Afar (‘ Afár af)" (<http://www.omniglot.com/writing/afar.htm>). Omniglot. Retrieved 23 August 2013.
12. "Berraka" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20150811051419/http://berraka.com/index.php/qasirwa>). Qafaraf. Archived from the original (<http://www.berraka.com/index.php/qasirwa>) on 2015-08-11. Retrieved 2015-08-23.

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External links

- [World Atlas of Language Structures information on Qafar](http://wals.info/languoid/lect/wals_co_de_qaf) (http://wals.info/languoid/lect/wals_co_de_qaf)
- - [Afar language learning web site](https://web.archive.org/web/20150811051419/http://berraka.com/index.php/qasirwa) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20150811051419/http://berraka.com/index.php/qasirwa>) (Much information about Afar, in English and French)
- [Omniglot - Afar \(‘ Afár af\)](http://www.omniglot.com/writing/afar.htm) (<http://www.omniglot.com/writing/afar.htm>)

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